

**WELLESLEY TRAILS COMMITTEE**

Natural Resources Commission, Town Hall, 525 Washington Street, Wellesley, Massachusetts 02482



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To: Natural Resources Commission
From: Trails Committee
Date: February 19, 2013
Subject: Trail Utilization along Western Section of Cochituate Aqueduct
CC: Board of Selectmen
Planning Board

Natick recently purchased Cochituate Aqueduct land from DCAM and has plans to open a trail along the aqueduct from Lake Cochituate to Wellesley. In anticipation of another major trail interconnection to an adjacent Town, the Trails Committee last year extended the Crosstown Trail to the Natick town line. The Crosstown Trail now heads west along the south side of Rt-9, crosses Rt-9 at Overbrook Dr, goes northward on Overbrook Dr to the Cochituate Aqueduct and follows the aqueduct to the Natick town line (Attachment #1). This detour to Overbrook Dr is required because no pedestrian crossing exists where the aqueduct crosses Rt-9 near Dunkin Donuts, and results in less trail utilization of the western section of the Cochituate Aqueduct than desired.

Last year the Trails Committee and the NRC were involved in a series of meetings with the MetroWest Regional Collaborative, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA) regarding development of interconnecting regional trails in the Boston area. Trail along the Cochituate Aqueduct from Lake Cochituate to Brookline is part of this initiative and the Crosstown Trail in Wellesley was cited as a model for regional trail development.

In May, 2012, the MetroWest Regional Collaborative asked the Trails Committee and NRC to prepare suggestions for improving open space connectivity (Attachment #2), and the Trails Committee developed a list of 8 possible improvements (Attachment #3). Miguel Lessing, Bob White, and Janet Bowser attended the MetroWest Regional Collaborative meeting held on June 6, 2012, and presented a marked up map and our suggestions for improvements. Included in our list was a suggestion to: "Provide a Rt-9 pedestrian crossing on the Cochituate Aqueduct above, over or under the highway. This will eliminate walking along Rt-9 to Overbrook Dr, and use the existing trail along the Cochituate Aqueduct from Rt-9 to Overbrook Dr."

In November, 2012, MAPC requested that the Trails Committee and NRC review their new Aqueduct Planning Map for both the Cochituate and Sudbury Aqueducts. Their map (Attachment #4) shows proposed trail along the Cochituate Aqueduct from Overbrook Dr to Rt-9. The Trail Committee reviewed the map and sent comments (Attachment #5).

Although at this time there is no commitment by the Town or State to provide a safe Rt-9 pedestrian crossing at the aqueduct, we would like to keep that option open to permit trail utilization of the complete western section of the Cochituate Aqueduct. We believe the most cost-effective and feasible implementation would be to go under Rt-9 using the abandoned aqueduct waterway as a tunnel under the highway. The recent request by Dunkin Donuts to expand their parking lot into Cochituate Aqueduct land does not appear to be an impediment to such a proposal. However, any Town plans to purchase the western section of the Cochituate Aqueduct and lease land for commercial development should take into consideration the possible future utilization of this land for open space and trail access along and crossing Rt-9.